1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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197 If the future viability of the myth is open to question, that of the language bond is not. A common language is a bond whose strength can hardly be overestimated; for pervasiveness and necessity no bond can match it. There are dialectical differences, particularly between north and south; a few quite regular sound shifts may cause brief difficulties in communication, and a few words have different meanings or are known only in a particular region. Nevertheless, there is almost complete mutual intelligibility. The Santal themselves are deeply [123] cognizant of language as a basis for intimacy and often indicated to me their desire that I properly learn their language. What little progress I made in this direction was greatly appreciated and always increased the intimacy which the Santal were willing to afford me. The much greater proficiency in Santali that my wife developed allowed her to be more of a Santal than I. As with the origin myth, Santali provides links with the neighboring Mundari-speaking people, though here intelligibility is not always satisfactory.

184 This is not the place to chronicle the numerous ceremonies, 776 rituals, ritual paraphernalia, deities, and religious concepts which the Santal hold in common. Apart from those important deities that belong exclusively to the various social units (house, local lineage, village, and the multi-village *Pargana*), there are a series of closely associated deities that belong to all the Santal. 776 These deities are worshiped in a variety of contexts but their 778 special abode is the "Sacred Grove" (*Jaher*), a clump of trees,* lying just beyond each village. The Sacred Grove is particularly the residence of *Marañ Buru*, a kind of "national spirit of

[361] [824] * These trees are left standing during the initial clearing when the village is established. They are largely *Shorea robusta* (*Sarjom*).

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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177 Although the Santal used to do some weaving and pottery-
439 making, they have traditionally obtained almost everything ex-
[286] cept foodstuffs and a few forest products from neighboring
[323] tribal or Hindu peoples. Even the drums and the flutes which
[534] are so integrated in the "pleasure" complex are invariably purchased from Hindu specialists. Furthermore, elite borrowings have often become "naturalized," i.e., accepted as Santal and then widely adopted so as to close the gap. Nevertheless, emulation of Hindus did not always go unnoticed and it will be recalled that there is evidence of resistance to such Hinduization.

177 The many Hindu cognates in this text give some indication
• 197 of the extent of linguistic borrowing. Only a few Santal kin
[601] terms are of non-Indo-European origin, and the system of
[614] dyadic relations among kin is very much like that of the Hindus; one of the largest clans, Hansdak', has a name clearly of Indo-European origin (*hans* = duck in Santali and Hindi), but one also notes the syncretism with the non-Indo-European
[538] (*dak'* = water in Santali). Even parts of the Rāmāyaṇa are sung in Santali and on occasion the Santal are allowed to enter the tale. Considering the prevalence of "parochialization" and "universalization" in India,[20] it is possible that some of what is common to the two cultures is of Santal origin. But the heavy incorporation of vocabulary clearly of Indo-European origin suggests that the flow was largely from the Hindus to the Santal.

177 Prior to industrial employment in this century a small cul-
178 tural gap separated the elite and common Santal. Though there
184 was some differential emulation of Hinduism it was largely of isolated traits which often became naturalized, and the basic "pleasure" orientation of the Santal was hardly altered.

[20] Marriott 1955:211.

[P. 44 is blank]

[p. 1]

CHAPTER I

SANTAL GENESIS AND MIGRATION

(*ACCORDING TO TRADITION*)

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[101]

The Santals form a niche in the great museum of races in India and being one of the Pre-Dravidian tribes of the Central Belt of India, an enquiry into their origin and subsequent developments, is one of the most fascinating though difficult tasks facing the student of social history. When one remembers the fact that even the history of political India is being written and rewritten in the light of new research, one can perhaps readily excuse the investigator into the pre-historic races of India, who, proceeding on insufficient and hazy data has to frame theories on the basis of myths and folk-lore and very often lands himself in mudbanks and fog.

Out of this dimness and obscurity certain facts help us with their light, as we proceed to trace the earliest history of the Santals. There is no manner of doubt that the tribe belongs to the generic Muṇḍà family. The Santal traditions support this and the Muṇḍà myths corroborate the assumption. So an enquiry into the origin of the Santals is inextricably blended with the rise and migration of the Muṇḍà family till (according to their traditions) they split up into separate tribes.

[197]

B Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1952
AW42 Santal AW42

vives as the common substratum of Munḍà forms of speech.[1] 174

A second theory, advocated by Sir W. Hunter and Mr. A. K. Keane, is to the effect that the Munḍà family seems to have entered India by the north-eastern passes. Next, they met the influx of the Dravidians by the north-western passes and crossed each other. This is based on the hypothesis of Col. Dalton who believed that the forefathers of the Santals came from north-east India, and found their way to the Chotanagpur plateau by following

1. "The language of the Munḍàs with their kindred dialects spoken by the Santals, Hos and the other allied tribes inhabiting the Chotanagpur plateau, has been shown by Peter Schmidt to form a sub-family of the family called by him Austro-Asiatic, which includes Mon Khmer, Wa, Nicoborese, Khasi and the aboriginal languages of Mallacca. There is another family which he calls Austronesian including Indonesian, Melanesian, and Polynesian. These two families are grouped into one great family which he calls the Austric." (Sir Edward Gait, Introduction to *The Munḍàs and their Country*, page iv). The following extract also deserves notice, "Geologists tell us that the Indian Peninsula was formerly cut off from the north of Asia by sea, while a land connexion existed on the one side with Madagascar and on the other with Malay Archipelago ; and although there is nothing to show that India was then inhabited, we know that it was so in Palaelithic times, when communications were probably still easier with the countries to the south-east and south-west than with those beyond the Himalayas." (Ref. Sir Edward Gait's Introduction to *The Munḍàs and their Country*, pp. ix-x). 197 • 174 174 (133)

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

144 in size, position and colour, resemble certain peculiar
143 blue spots found on Mongol children, which are said to be a distinct race-mark not found outside the Mongol people."[1]

Their Language

• 197 The Santals speak a language of their own. Linguists say that Santali belongs to the Muṇḍà family of languages, which in its turn belongs to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family, termed so by Peter Schmidt. According to Dr. Campbell, this language has reached a much higher stage of development than any other dialect of the linguistic stock to which it belongs and is spoken with little variation in idiom or pronunciation over the greater part of the Santali-speaking areas. Northern Santali or that spoken in Bhagalpur, Monghyr, the Santal Parganas, Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh and Manbhum, is the language of an overwhelming majority of the tribe, and is more polished than Southern Santali, or that spoken in the remaining districts, as a dialect, or a group of dialects of it.[2]

[192] Like all other languages, Santali has drawn upon other languages, but the influence of Bengali seems

[113] 1 *Mongolian race-marks among Santals.* J.A.S.B., 1904, Part II, p. 26.

[113] 2 Ref. Introduction to Dr. Campbell's Santali Dictionary (Edn. 1933).

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

to be the most prominent. Any one glancing through a Santali dictionary will be struck with the vocabulary bodily assimilated by the Santals from the current dialects of Bengal, and any one listening even to their folk-songs will notice that a large number of them are really in Bengali. We marked it even in the heart of Santalia, the Santal Parganas, when we heard a Santal woman humming, "Panch takar ghati bati chore laia gela" (*My pots and bowls worth rupees five have been stolen by thieves.*)[1]

Santali itself is a peculiarly expressive language so far as natural objects and things concerning the common life of agriculturists. But when it comes to the expression of things spiritual or the common ideas of modern civilization, it has got to fall back on the speech of the neighbours.

It is not, however, a written language and their traditional legends are orally handed down. The question of a Santal script engaged the attention of the early European Missionaries and they used the Roman script. It is due to their efforts that a large number of books have been written in the Roman script and the education imparted to Santals in the

1 The missionary in charge of the Dharampur district (S. P.) tells a story that while he was there with his wife, a Santal tried to explain that it was useless for them to teach Santali, as they knew the language well enough and pressed for Bengali or Hindi. (*Annual Report of the Santal Mission of Northern Churches* 1934).

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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SANTAL PARGANAS

174 177 social order of the Pre-Dravidian Santals. In the Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian culture of India, the Santals rather than the Mundas or Hos of Chota Nagpur stand in the lime light. Similarly their contact with Dravidian culture which at one time was not at all confined to Southern India, is well proved from their neighbours, the Malers, who in language along with the Chota Nagpur Oraons speak a Dravidian • 197 tongue. Linguistically the Santals belong to what has been called the westernmost peripheral representatives of what is the Hawaiian type family in the Pacific.

161 162 At the Census of 1931 they numbered over two and a half million. In Santal Parganas the number was 7,54,804, the rest was distributed over the other parts of Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Assam. If we study the strength of the population of the Santal during the thirty years (1901 to 1931) in the two provinces, Bihar and Bengal combined, it can be seen that they have increased from 18,69,074 to 25,08,789 which represents an increase of over 33 percent in a single generation.

174 As regards the origin of the Santals it is very difficult to say anything definite. There are no authentic written records of their own. From the traditions, customs, language and physical features of Santals one can conjecture to a certain extent about their origin. On the basis of the above items several theories have been put forward to account for their origin. Revd. 3 Λ 114 Skrefsurd[1] has suggested that the Santals entered India 174 from the North West and first settled in the Punjab and then made their way to their present habitat at Chota Nagpur. But Colonel Dalton and Sir William Hunter[2],

1. Introduction to Grammar of Santali Language 1873.
2. Annals of Rural Bengal.
3. [Erratum: this should read "Rev." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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CHAPTER III

The Santal Social Organization

Family: The family amongst the Santals should be of great interest considering that the Santals have been described as polyandrous. But besides the privileges of the younger brother over an elder brother's wife or the latitude allowed to the husband with the wife's younger sisters, there ought to have been traces of at least what has been called group-marriage. As the Santals could be taken as the representatives of a state of culture preceding the Dravidians in India and so be taken as a type of primitive patriliny, theoretically it should have shown the stages of family life which Morgan has described to be of pre-Aryan type. Linguistically, the Santals belong to what has been called the Austric group and thus would be the westernmost peripheral representatives of what is the Hawaiian type of family in the Pacific. In social structure also as well as in a sort of totemic organization the Santals recall several features of the Australian aboriginals. So an inquiry into the Santal family organization compared with the Hawaiian types or Australian systems or the polyandrous Nair or Tibetan types is necessary.

Types of Family: Amongst the Santal generally two types of family can be seen :

(1) The individual family consisting of father, mother, sons and daughters.

(2) The second consisting of grandfather, grandmother, sons, their wives, daughters (unmarried)

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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and it is conducted according to the provision of the Indian Christian Marriage Act.

Material Culture. Material culture of the Santals of the Santal parganas has not much changed. They now wear cotton dhuties, shirts and gangees and the women have accepted cotton saris which are used by the Hindus. The well-to-do Christian Santals wear European dress, *i.e.* coats, pants, shirts, socks and shoes. The christian women wear Saris, blouses and petti coat according to the Hindu style.

Some of the younger men and women of the Christian community go out for employment in the towns and cities and when they come back they display their superior material culture, such as fountain pen, wristwatches and other luxury goods.

Rice beer is their important drink but the Christian missionaries make propaganda in favour of total abstinence, and the Christian Santals are gradually giving up this habit and tea is being substituted for it. Machine made cigarettes are slowly coming into use.

In the preparation of rice it seems they have copied something from the Bengali Hindus. The Santals like the Bengalis use boiled rice for their food and unboiled rice for offering to their tribal deities.

The indigenous husking machine of the Santals is mortar and pestle, but they also use husking lever (dhenki) in husking rice which they have copied from their Hindu neighbours.

The Santals, when they speak among themselves, use their own language. But with the 'Dikhus' in the Santal Parganas they speak in broken Hindi and

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Bengali. The female members mostly cannot speak any language except their own. They learn Hindi when they come in contact with the Hindi speaking labourers in the coal mines, railway workshops or when they come in contact with the Hindu Mahajans (money lenders) and traders. Some of the Hindi and Bengali words have also been introduced in their vocabulary which can be noticed in the language of their *mantras* and *prayers*.

Vermilion is one of the most important item for marriage and in the worship of deities both for the Hindus and the Santals. Some think that the Santals have copied it from the Hindus, but it is doubtful whether it is their borrowed thing at all. Because in such important social customs as marriage and worship of tribal deities, vermilion is considered by the Santals as an essential ingredient. There is a kind of marriage in which a Santal can marry a woman simply by applying vermilion on her forehead, which shows that vermilion is the only binding source of marriage here. Such an important ingredient of culture is not usually borrowed and we can take it as a case of culture similarity. Similarly, another custom of *Garde Jawae* is prevalent both among the Santals and the Hindus. There are other similarities in their social, religious and economic structure with the Hindus, but all of them cannot be attributed to their borrowing from the Hindus. Infact, saying so, implies that the Santals had no culture of of their own, which can not be true. It seems that there has been a two-way traffic of culture exchange-Hindus having borrowed some elements from the Santals and vice versa.

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Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state those features which present-day Indian culture owes to the Proto-Australoid: "To the Proto-Australoid races may perhaps be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food taboos, and magical belief still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and intermarriage which forms the basis of the caste system must also owe its origin to them."[1] It is impossible to dogmatize on these subjects when one remembers how widespread each of the above factors is among primitive cultures in various parts of the world. The tribal structure of the Santals is totemistic and the clans are patrilinear, as among the other tribes of Central India. Many of the taboos and customs which have grown up round life's crises, many features in the tribal ritual, their attitude towards disease and towards the supranatural world, are fundamentally similar not only throughout these tribes but throughout the lower range of the Hindu social structure. The perusal of such a book as William Crooke's *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*[2] gives convincing evidence of the large stock of ideas that are held in common.

By the test of language the Santals reveal a high degree of social cohesion. Dr. J. H. Hutton's judgment cannot be gainsaid: "The extent of the survival of tribal languages is a better index than that of the survival of tribal religion to the social cohesion of the tribe, since the test of language is easier and more definite than that of religion, where the borderland of Hinduism is often vague and obscure."[3] The Santals have been more tenacious of their language than many of the other peoples to whom they are racially allied. They are the largest tribe in India to retain an aboriginal language to the present day. This belongs to what is known as the Austric or Austro-Asiatic family. It is closely related to Mundari as well as to Ho, Korku, Savara and Gadaba, languages spoken by smaller tribes. The relationship of the Santals with these tribes is racial and cultural as well as linguistic, and as they live in neighbouring territories it is very likely that they have a common origin. They have nevertheless been separate long enough to develop their individual languages and to possess distinct though allied cultures. Other representatives of the Austro-Asiatic languages are found farther afield, the Mon-Khmer branch being found in Indo-China, while Khasi, spoken in Assam, is another. The fact that Khasis are Mongoloid and that their society is matri-

[1] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 28. [2] Oxford University Press, 1926.
[3] *Census Report of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Ch. x, p. 348.

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linear is an example of the danger in seeking to base racial history on linguistic affinities; but as recently as 1943 Professor S. K. Chatterji[1] speaks of the Austric race, in which he follows scholars like Schmidt and Hévésy.

The Santals first began to attract the attention of Europeans during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first book on the Santals, published in 1867, was entitled *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*. The writer, E. G. Man,[2] had by then been serving a period as an Assistant Commissioner in the newly formed district of the Santal Parganas. It is natural that the Santals attracted most attention in that district, where they were not only found in the greatest numbers, but where also they had risen in rebellion in 1855. Long before the rebellion the government had indeed become aware of their existence and of the special problems which they presented to the administration. An earlier report,[3] the result of an investigation into the land tenures of the "hill people", or Paharias, of the Raj Mahal hills, which had been written in 1819, could not fail to make some reference to the Santals, who at that period were engaged in a mass migration into the area and were driving the Paharias into the farther fastnesses of the hills. At an even earlier date Francis Buchanan's account[4] of the district of Bhagalpur in 1810–11 gives a short account of some "five hundred families" of Santals whom he found in the Dumka subdivision in 1809.

Another early account was published in W. W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*.[5] The writer claimed little first-hand knowledge and based his description on information supplied by the American Baptist missionaries who began work among the Santals in the western portions of the Midnapore district and in Orissa. The first reference to the Santals in the papers of the American Free-Will Baptist Mission, as it was then called, is alive with all the excitement of a new discovery. In the journal of "Brother Noyes", under the date December 29, 1838, he records: "Came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle. As soon as I came in sight of the houses, I felt persuaded I was coming among old acquaintances, they so much resembled the stick huts of the Coles of Cumbhulpore.

[1] S. K. Chatterji, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "The Linguistic Problem", 1943.
[2] E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, London, Calcutta, 1867.
[3] H. C. Sutherland, *Report on the Management of the Rajmahal Hills*, dated June 8, 1819, Deputy Commissioner's Record Room, Dumka.
[4] F. Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Bhagulpur in 1810–11*, Patna, 1939.
[5] W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, 1868.

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separate representation. In the elections to the Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly which took place in 1946 a Santal offered himself for election for the first time from the Bankura Rural Scheduled caste constituency. He was a member of one of the rare well-to-do Santal families and had received education up to the Intermediate Arts standard of the Calcutta University at the mission college in Bankura. He stood as an "Independent" and he was supported by the Moslem League organization, but he failed to be elected. His rival was a non-Santal member of the Scheduled castes who was a Congress candidate. No Santal has yet been elected to the Bengal Provincial Assembly.

The fact that the dominant Santal attitude to their neighbours is one of suspicion and latent hostility does not mean that this has always been the case. There are some indications pointing to a time when relations between Santals and Hindus were more friendly than they are today. The story already related about the Mahato is one. It may well have been that during the period of Moslem suzerainty the aboriginals made common cause with the Hindus. To go back much farther, P. O. Bodding[1] has suggested that in the story of the *Ramayana*, one of the great Hindu epics, there is a hint of an alliance between aboriginals and the hero of the epic, Ram, when he made war against the King of Lanka. The reference is to the assistance given by the "Hanuman log", or monkeys, who, it has been inferred, may well have been in fact human beings of the stock from which the ancestors of the present-day Santals were drawn. In Santal folklore there are stories which describe the marriage of human beings with monkeys, and there is little doubt that such stories symbolize the results of interracial marriages.

Living as they do in close contact with their neighbours, the Santals have borrowed heavily from the ideas and institutions around them, and in some cases they have doubtless contributed to the common stock. It is almost impossible to isolate certain features in their culture and say that these have been borrowed from non-Santal sources. That which is distinctive in Santal culture is the way in which they have used a common background to conserve their tribal life and to provide themselves with the rudiments of a philosophy. The retention of their language as a vigorous element of their own culture must have preserved much from the ancient days of their own life, and has to some extent cut them off from familiarity with the epics

[1] *District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas.*

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and legends of Hinduism. The linguistic evidence shows how their material culture has been vitally affected and has some bearing on the more elusive realm of thought and belief. The grammatical structure of Santali has little in common with that of the Indo-Aryan tongues. It is an agglutinative and not an inflectional language. There have, however, been large and extensive borrowings of words. An instructive example can be taken from their method of husking rice. The term *ḍhinki*, used for a foot-pedal rice husker, has been borrowed from Bengali, and a *ḍhinki* is found in almost every home. The rice that is husked at the time of making sacrifices must be prepared in the home of the village priest, and in its preparation the use of the older and more primitive *ukhuṛ* is obligatory. This is a wooden mortar in which the rice is husked by hand with a wooden pestle, or *tok*. Both these words are Austro-Asiatic in origin. It is likely that when the household adopted the new method of husking rice the tribe did not change over from the old method of husking the sacred rice for fear of a loss in efficacy. One reason given is that as the *ḍhinki* is operated by the foot, rice husked in the *ḍhinki* is unclean and so unfit for offering to the spirits. It may be that the association of a mortar and pestle with sexual symbolism enhanced its magical value. The symbolism in this case is familiar to the Santal mind, for one way of expressing differences of sex is to refer to boys as "pestles" and to girls as "mortars". The *ukhuṛ* has to be used by the medicine man in preparing remedies; it is also used at marriages, when the feet of the bridegroom's party are washed over an *ukhuṛ*, and an *ukhuṛ* filled with water is required during the death ceremonies. In Bengal the rice which forms the daily food of the people is boiled before husking, and the Santals follow the same method in preparing it; but the rice used in sacrifices, *aḍwa caole*, is never so treated, being dried in the sun.

Among their domestic animals, the fowl, the dog and the goat have non-Bengali names, while the names for pigeons, sheep, pigs and, most important of all, their cattle are borrowed. Fowls, goats and pigs are all used in their sacrifices. In the realm of wild life the Santal has found little need to borrow a vocabulary from his neighbours. Wild animals, birds, trees and shrubs, many fish and insects, also snakes, have Santali names. The same is true of most of the weapons used in hunting. Although the term for paddy is Santal, the names of all the implements now used in rice cultivation and the terms for the